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A MEMOIR OF JAMES KNOWLES KELLOGG

BY REV. F. A. McCARTY.

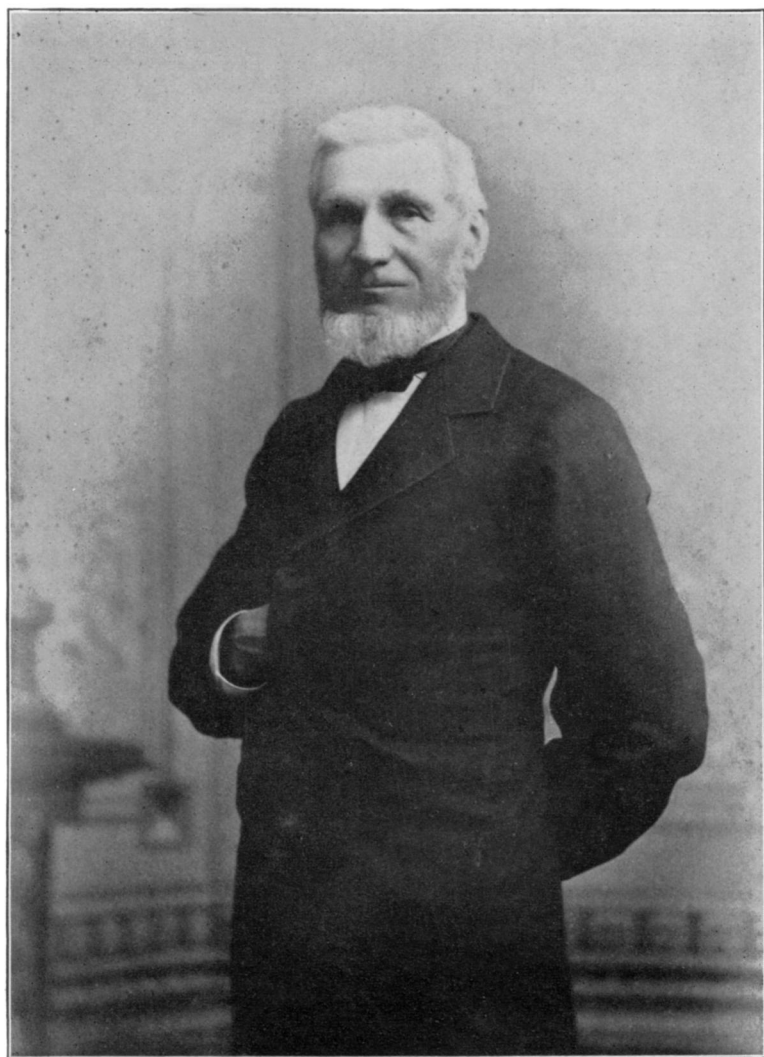
Strong stalwart men are the greatest asset in the life of any nation. They are its foundation stones, they give us the meaning of the national life itself, and explain its institutions, and its historic movements. Far in the forefront of every great movement has marched a great leader. Great men are priceless.

So it is in community life. The strong, outstanding characters are its richest treasures. They are its builders. Their deeds are its history. This is especially true of those daring sturdy pioneers, who left the comforts of an established community, to come to this new land and lay the foundation for empire in this great midwest.

Great men are not always famous men, and certainly famous men are not always great. Jesse James, Barnum's Big Boy, "The Immortal J. N." and Harry K. Thaw were all famous, famous not on account of strength, but because of weakness and abnormality. Indeed we are inclined to take the great and strong as a matter of course, and set weakness, crime and malformation in the glaring lime light. True greatness is like the perfume of flowers, it is not material. It can not be seen, nor weighed, nor handled, and yet it is most real and powerful and controls life in a masterful way.

Today we are here to honor, and pay our tributes to the memory of one of these stalwart and outstanding characters of this community. James Knowles Kellogg came to Tremont in an early day and gave more than a half century of his splendid life service to the intellectual, moral and spiritual life of its people.

It was not my privilege to know James Knowles Kellogg. Indeed I never saw him and yet I have come into such remarkably close touch with his life that he seems as one of my intimate friends, I knew his esteemed brother John Kellogg passing well. He was a Justice of the Peace, a community advisor, and godfather to everybody in McLean, Illinois, the home of my boyhood. He was a most intimate friend of my father's, and sort of grandfather to me. This made me feel



JAMES KNOWLES KELLOGG

almost akin to the family of James Kellogg when I came to Tremont as student pastor in 1894. I found a delightful home in the commodious, comfortable old house. This house of James Knowles Kellogg was built almost a century ago. It has been a home to me ever since. I have enjoyed the generous hospitality of his family, rested under the trees which he planted, I carry his watch, work with his tools, read his books and in many ways enter into those intimate things of his life which makes it seem almost impossible that I never knew the man himself. I want to express my thanks to the Tremont friends, and also to Judge Curran and Miss Matie Gaither of Pekin, who assisted in gathering materials for this paper. We are amazed at how much information had already been lost, and how little could be found concerning this well-known man. This fact emphasizes the need of Historical societies and memorial meetings.

James Knowles Kellogg was born in Pittsfield, Mass., January 17, 1800. He was the son of Nathaniel Kellogg and Prudence Knowles Kellogg. Little is known of these ancestors. They were reputable farmers, people of sterling worth and character. An evidence of their standing and the esteem in which they were held is the fact that Nathaniel Kellogg was a candidate for election to the Legislature of Massachusetts at the time of his death. We have no record of the early life of James, no doubt he worked on the farm and attended the public school, as did other dutiful farmer boys of that period, until the long-looked-for day arrived when he left the farm to attend Union College at Schenectady, New York. It would be interesting to know the hopes and plans, sacrifices and ambitions connected with realizing his college dream.

An interesting ray of light is thrown upon his ancestry by an old letter which is still preserved, and which was written by James Knowles, the grandfather on his mother's side. It was to his wife, written on the frigate Boston in 1777. The vessel was to sail next morning with sealed orders. The young husband and father spent the whole time from evening until midnight writing this touching message. It breathes the intense spirit of Revolutionary days. Throughout the long letter there is the brave attempt to be cheerful, and optimistic, but

under the surface there is clearly a premonition that he will never return to his family. There are the most explicit directions concerning his business, and family affairs. After the affectionate close, there follows a tender postscript, and as if unwilling to take final leave of his family, he adds a significant "N. B." This letter was the last word the family ever received from the brave young soldier of the seas. It was after this patriot grandfather that James Knowles Kellogg was named.

The story of those four romantic, courageous years in Union College would be interesting, but unfortunately no record remains. It was a vastly greater undertaking for farmers to send their sons to college in those primitive days of privation, than it is in these opulent days. His father was already dead, which made the problem greater, and doubtless delayed his college career. He worked his way through Union College, and graduated with honors.

Doubtless, the most fascinating story of this period would be that of his college romance. However we only know that James was a frequent guest at one of the old homes of Schenectady, the Fisk home at 711 Union Street. He fell desperately in love with one of the three sisters, Mary Fisk. The other two were Aschah and Fannie. They too seem to have found a large place in his affections, but Mary was the idol of his heart. So wrapped were these two young lovers in their own delicious romance, it never occurred to them to leave a record for posterity. James Kellogg and Mary Fisk were married in 1833, and the next year came to Tazewell County, Illinois.

Little can we realize what it meant for cultured, refined, sensitive young people from the long established East to come out to this raw, undeveloped, crude country with its shiftless ways, swamps, unbridged rivers and trackless forests. There were no railroads, and all modes of travel were most primitive and difficult. We who get aboard a palatial Pullman, sleep in comfort, dine luxuriously, and make the trip in less than two days, can have little conception of the magnitude of this undertaking.

An intimate glimpse of these conditions as Mr. and Mrs. Kellogg found them, is given in a most interesting book by Ruth Farnham (Mrs. Eliza Farnham) called, "Life In Prairie Land." Mrs. Farnham tells of her trip from St. Louis up the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers to Pekin. The wheezing, coughing old steamboat with its self important captain creeping along at snail's pace, was about as primitive and uncomfortable as one could imagine. At one point it requires one and one-half hours to effect a landing.

On this trip, Mrs. Farnham seems to have worked her way into the special graces of the one-handed stewardess, who granted her many favors as she seemed to be a person of distinction. When time came to retire the first night, this tender-hearted chambermaid suggested to Mrs. Farnham that she occupy her room instead of the cabin. "Kase," she explained, "the bugs ain't a touch in hyur to what they be in yonder." The stewardess seemed surprised at Mrs. Farnham's dismay, and said, "Oh, you needn't dread 'em so powerful; I broomed the berths today and shook the 'trasses, so they won't be so mighty bad." Mrs. Farnham accepted the kind offer, but it seemed the vermin had not had a good feed for a long time, and set to work for a gorgeous feast on the anatomy of the newcomer. When she explained to the chambermaid the next morning the cause for her early rising and hollow eyes, that champion of pioneer days said, "I reckon thar must be a mighty small chance of varmits about you, kase, I swept up about a pint of 'em yesterday and throwed 'em overboard; so it's impossible you could ha' had a great many." Imagine the college graduate, the dignified and reserved James Knowles Kellogg, taking his accomplished and refined bride out into these new and trying conditions.

Leaving his wife in Pekin, the young husband went into the interior to select a farm. After considerable search he found one to suit his finances in Morton township. The bridal couple found a hospitable welcome in the home of Mrs. Farnham's sister near Groveland. Here they kept house in one room until their own home was finished.

A very warm and cordial friendship sprang up between these two cultivated women of kindred minds and tastes, out

in a lonely land. Nothing binds hearts together like common hardship and common sufferings. While their husbands were away at work they toiled and planned, and wept and rejoiced together. This deep and most intimate friendship was greatly strengthened by their loving preparation for the little stranger that was expected soon in the new home. The bride was brave and happy, and the future seemed filled with promise, but how soon was all this to be changed. On the "24th of April of that year," says Mrs. Farnham, "there commenced the most remarkable series of storms ever known in the country." The storms continued not for forty but for sixty days, and sometimes twice a day, until the end of June. They were accompanied by the most terrific lightning and thunder ever witnessed. The storms came so suddenly that the men could not reach the house until they were drenched. Nobody tried to work during these terrific storms; the stoutest blanched before the tremendous cannonade. Dinner would be set, a small cloud would appear, a faint roll of thunder, appetites would vanish and dinner would be set away untouched. Between showers the sun would come out with scorching heat and almost scald the vegetation. The ground was saturated with water, every hollow became a stagnant pool to engender disease, and cellars were filled with water. So that after the storm demon who had raged through the earth had passed, the pestilence followed to make havoc of human life.

The young bride kept her spirits and courage high until her husband was stricken with the fever and just then her own time of trial approached. They had no help except the laborer who had worked on the farm. Neighbors were scarce. Her loyal friend rode over every day after her own work was done to minister to the afflicted couple. But soon the expectant Mother herself became a victim of the fever, the outcome was premature confinement, which resulted in the death of both the mother and babe. The first time the stricken husband left the house was to follow the bodies of his wife and babe to their last resting place. It was the first grave in the community. What must have been the appalling grief of this man, out in the new world. Not only was his

wife denied many of the comforts of life which would have been hers in her Eastern home, but he, himself, was not permitted to minister unto her in the time of her greatest need.

Mrs. Farnham has devoted a beautiful chapter in her book to these awful experiences, and to this tragedy, which came into the life of the man whom she calls "The Solitary Man."

After two years Mr. Kellogg returned to Schenectady, where he was married to the sister of his first wife, Miss Aschah Fisk. A letter written to her, after their marriage and while he was away teaching at Fayetteville, New York, is most interesting. They are planning for the long trip westward, another momentous journey. But his experience of other days is of great value here.

After a long and wearisome journey the couple settled on the old farm in Morton Township, where they expected to spend their lives as farmers. But this was not to be. The village of Tremont had been laid out in 1835, and settled largely by eastern people of culture and intelligence. The school house was one of the first buildings. In 1838 the village found itself without a teacher. This was a condition not to be tolerated by a people who made a specialty of intellectual acumen. The directors learned that this new farmer, James Kellogg, had been a most successful teacher in the East. They at once brought all their influence to bear upon him to induce him to take their school for four months. To this he finally consented, but it was not for four months, but for many years. So eminently successful was he that the community would not accept a resignation. Doubtless he himself had come to realize that God intended him for a teacher of youth, rather than a grower of crops. He continued as the head of the Tremont School for thirteen years or until 1851.

The course covered was an elaborate one and would no doubt dismay the teacher of today. It took in everything from the primary to the academy, including Latin and Greek, and prepared students for college. It was during these thirteen years of his life that James Kellogg rendered a

monumental service to the Tremont community and for the world.

It is impossible to make a complete roll of his pupils. A few of the more distinguished ones are: Rev. John McGarvey, D. D., President of the Theological Seminary at Lexington, Kentucky; Rev. Theodore Morrison, D. D., of Chicago, and father of Bishop Theodore N. Morrison, Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Iowa; Professor Asa Fisher, of Eureka College; and Louis James, the tragedian.

It is difficult at this distance, or any distance, to properly estimate or value the work of James Knowles Kellogg as a teacher. All agree he was "born to the manner fit." He combined in himself those qualities of strength and firmness together with sympathetic tenderness which are needed in the real teacher. He was a strict disciplinarian, indeed strict in all his manners of life. He was quiet and dignified, even somewhat reserved and austere, but within there was the most congenial, sympathetic and brotherly soul. He was keenly alive to every human interest. He had a well ordered and well disciplined mind, and a mind well stored and furnished by extensive and well selected reading. His library covered a wide range and was composed of books of high order.

With all his intense earnestness, and deep seriousness of mind, there was a fine sense of humor, and at times his wit sparkled. All this was superb equipment for a teacher. He easily and naturally held the highest ideals up before his pupils, and gave them the truest inspiration and unerring direction. His pupils soon found their way through the stern exterior to the real warm genial heart of the man on the inside. They feared him in the best sense, and both respected and loved him.

Many stories are still extant which indicate that the gayer side of school life was not neglected by either teacher or pupils. There was plenty of evidence that human nature eighty years ago is pretty much as it is today, and that youngsters enjoyed their full quota of pranks. Of course, we expect the minister's family to lead in these things. Margaret Andrews, the daughter of the Congregational min-

ister, was true to this general reputation; she was the leader in all school escapades. To punish her for some misbehavior she was sent to the loft of the school, which was used as a store room. When the teacher felt the punishment was sufficient he climbed the ladder and opened the trap door to let the prisoner out, she had ripped open a large feather pillow and threw the contents over the amazed teacher; the feathers floating through the room like a snowstorm.

At another time when he returned from lunch, imagine the astonishment of this austere pedagogue to find that the very flower of the school had transformed the school room into a dance hall, and was tripping the light fantastic with astonishing proficiency. Think of it, there were Clara Perkins, Nan Robert, Margaret Andrews, Leslie Perkins, Alfred Dean, Don Maus, Dawson Ingalls, and "shades of the saints," Ruth Fenner. William Shaw with the stove shovel for violin, and a poker for a bow was musician and caller. It is gratifying to recall that no dire punishment was meted out to these offending youngsters, but such a sane and genial appreciation of the situation, that wonderfully ingratiated him into the hearts of the participants.

The true teacher is a benefactor, whose value the world has never appreciated. When the Boys' Latin School was dedicated in the city of Boston, that prince of educators, Horace Mann, delivered the dedicatory address. In this address he said, "It is said this building has cost an immense amount of money, and it has, but if it truly educates and makes a real man out of one boy it will have paid." After the exercises, a friend said, "Mr. Mann, your statement, today, was greatly exaggerated, was it not?" "What statement," asked Mann. "That the expenditures for this school would be justified if it really educated one boy." To which Horace Mann replied, looking his questioner straight in the eye, "Not if it were my boy." This community could never compute its debt to the strong stalwart character, who poured the best of himself into its boys and girls for thirteen consecutive years.

God's great teachers have ever been His real leaders. The world's history cannot be written without them. When-

ever a good cause is helped forward, a new era inaugurated in human society, you are sure to find it is the teacher, who has headed the vanguard, blazed the way, and implanted this spirit of the new evangel in the hearts and minds of the boys and girls, who in later years have made the better spirit a reality in practical life. The Greeks, who have so powerfully fashioned life through the ages, were wont to say, "An army of stags with a lion for a leader is better than an army of lions with a stag for leader." It is the world's leaders, who have inspired ordinary men and made of them conquering armies and over-mastering civilizations.

Who are our really great Educators? We might name the Presidents of our large Universities; but every thinking man understands perfectly well that the College President does not compare in his influence and power to shape the developing life, to the teacher in the elementary schools, who has had the opportunity to mould the boy or girl before the world has spoiled them. James Kellogg did this for Tremont's young life from 1838 to 1851.

After 1858, Mr. Kellogg retired from the profession of teaching, but he never lost his interest in the schools. He served as a member of the board, visited them frequently, and until the day of his death freely gave his wise counsel and his rich inspiration.

During the remainder of his life he gave himself to looking after his own business interests, to travel, reading, and serving in various ways the larger interests of the community. Before the day of Rotary Clubs and Chambers of Commerce, he exemplified in a practical way the splendid spirit of service, and building the community welfare. His was the real community spirit.

It is impossible to recount the services of this public spirited man as a citizen, a member of the Village Board and organizations for community betterment. Not only did he hold offices of public trust, which he always discharged with efficiency and integrity but his personal influence on public affairs was always helpful and wholesome.

Perhaps the longest and most conspicuous service which he rendered was that of a Christian leader in the religious

life of the community. He was one of the pillars in the Congregational Church of Tremont, loyal to its pastors, its people and its enterprises. He was no less famous as a Sunday School teacher than as a day school teacher. He is lovingly remembered by men and women, who were fortunate enough to be members of his Sunday School classes. It is said the supreme message of his later years as a Sunday School teacher seemed to be, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

In the social life of the church and community, as well as in the distinctively religious, he came wonderfully to his own. He was the life of social gatherings and could recount the thrilling experiences of early days and college life in a most fascinating way.

This paper is an appreciation of the life and labors of James Knowles Kellogg, and can but briefly touch upon the family history. His father, Nathaniel Kellogg, died in Pittsfield, Mass., in 1822 at the age of forty-nine years, when James had but recently passed his majority. His mother, Prudence Knowles Kellogg, came to Illinois and died in Tremont in 1854, and is buried in the neighboring town of Washington. Nor is there time or space to pay a fitting tribute to the beautiful character, the sweet disposition, and lovable qualities of the gentle and devoted wife, Aschah Kellogg. Hers was the quiet but heroic spirit. Coming to this new land, courageously facing its hardships, and taking the place of her sister, whose tragic death touched all hearts, she was a help-meet in every way to her husband. The influence of her brave spirit and womanly character was like fragrance of flowers in the community life.

Two children were born to James and Aschah Kellogg; Francis Fisk Kellogg was born in 1840 and died in 1843; Mary Fisk Kellogg was born February 12, 1845. She follows in the footsteps of the immortal Lincoln, at least in so far as the matter of birthday is concerned. Miss Kellogg has always lived in Tremont. She has given her chief attention to art and travel. She still remains to preserve the ancestral home, and shed upon her friends the benediction of her life and courageous spirit.

Shortly after the birth of Mary Fisk Kellogg, Miss Anne became a member of the family and was always known as Anne Kellogg. She lived in the old home, intimately connected with the life of Tremont, and devoted to her friends. She was called by death last May. James Knowles Kellogg died in 1888 and his wife Aschah in 1895. They are buried in the beautiful cemetery of the town they loved, and where they gave their lives in devoted service.

Mr. Kellogg preserved his strength of mind, his keen insight into men and affairs, and his interest in everything human until the end. Indeed, those years of maturity and age seemed to be especially rich in strength, inspiration and wholesome influence. This is clearly seen in a beautiful letter still preserved, and written by him from Schenectady, January 17, 1885, his birthday. It was to Josie Roberts, now Mrs. Josie Roberts Bent. Miss Roberts was a school girl then, and had written him a birthday letter. He answers with all the enthusiasm and interest of a school boy. He reminds her of the toil and hardship necessary to success, but this must not be over done. "*Creation is not more important than recreation.*" He has just seen President Elect Cleveland, and describes him and the circumstances with the detail and animation that would delight a school girl.

James Knowles Kellogg represented that sturdy type of rugged manhood which is of inestimable worth, and which seeks not fame and greatness, but the humble path of duty. He walked among his fellows as an equal, but he was a giant and a tower of strength. He was an inspiration because he touched the lives of others so closely and powerfully. His was a spirit akin to the Pilgrims, who followed the inner light, through uncounted hardships, to a new land and lighted here the torch of freedom and set the sovereign conscience on the throne in this new civilization.

What was the source of his strength? A Christian home and godly parents gave him the right start and a true foundation, a regnant conscience and a faith that never wavered, guided and sustained him through the nearly four score and ten years of his pilgrimage.

He was a son, lovable, thoughtful, obedient. A husband devoted, faithful and tender. A father wise, indulgent and considerate. He beautified and exalted the home. A scholar thoughtful and industrious. He loved knowledge for its practical application to real life. A citizen with clear-cut convictions, ready to state and stand by them whether popular or not. He was a friend and neighbor, who enriched the life of others, the life of social gatherings and was always considerate of others about him. A Christian who not only believed but lived his faith, winning the favor of both his fellow men and his God.

It is hard to think of a man like James Knowles Kellogg as being dead. His life was so full potentially, that he still lives in the hearts and minds of all who knew him.

“There is no death! The stars go down
 To rise upon some fairer shore,
 And bright in heaven’s jeweled crown
 They shine forevermore.
 There is no death! But angel forms
 Walk o’er the earth with silent tread;
 They bear our best loved things away,
 And then we call them dead.”